

Claims:

1 - 14. (Cancelled)

15. (Currently Amended) A lute comprising a neck, a bulging sound box tapering down to a virtual point and attached to said neck at said virtual point, a peg box at an end of said neck remote from said sound box, and strings stretched between said peg box and an end piece, said sound box including a vaulted back having a planar rim that is curved outwardly from one side of said neck in a continuous curve to the other side of said neck and a face having a longitudinal centerline and connected to said rim of said back, said face including transverse ribs on an inside surface and said end piece mounted on an outside surface in a longitudinal portion thereof corresponding to ~~a the~~ longitudinal third of said face remote from said neck, said face having at least one aperture between said inside and outside surfaces in a longitudinal half thereof nearest said neck, wherein at least a portion of said face, including said end piece, is vaulted outward from said planar rim by at least 2 mm., ~~and~~ wherein said face includes an area at a longitudinal end thereof remote from said neck which has a longitudinal length of approximately twice a longitudinal distance between said end piece and said remote longitudinal end of said ~~face~~ face, and ~~which~~ wherein said area is devoid of transverse ribs.

16. (Previously Presented) A lute as specified in claim 15 wherein said area of said face includes laths extending in a generally longitudinal direction and arranged symmetrically about said longitudinal centerline.

17. (Previously Presented) A lute according to claim 16 wherein said laths are arranged at acute angles with respect to said centerline.

18. (Previously Presented) A lute according to claim 16 wherein the laths are in a fan configuration having central axes intersect at an imaginary point on said centerline of the face.
19. (Previously Presented) A lute according to claim 16 wherein the laths run parallel to said centerline.
20. (Previously Presented) A lute according to claim 16 wherein an even number of laths is provided.
21. (Previously Presented) A lute according to claim 16 wherein an odd number of laths is provided.
22. (Previously Presented) A lute according to claim 15 wherein said face has a thickness which diminishes toward said rim at least in area devoid of transverse ribs.
23. (Currently Amended) A lute according to claim 15 wherein said transverse ribs have ends which rest on abutments proximate to said planar rim.
24. (Previously Presented) A lute according to claim 16 wherein at least two of said laths extend below at least one transverse rib which lies closest to the rib-free area, wherein said at least one transverse rib comprises a tunnel-shaped recess through which said laths pass without contact between said laths and said transverse ribs.

25. (Previously Presented) A lute according to claim 16 wherein said neck includes a fingerboard having frets and wherein said fingerboard and said frets extend onto a segment of said.

26. (Previously Presented) A lute according to claim 25 wherein said face is reinforced on its inside with a piece of hardwood in the region of said face segment.

27. (Previously Presented) A lute according to claim 15 wherein eight strings (17) are strung, said strings being tuned C - D - E - A - d - g - h - e'.

28. (Previously Presented) A lute according to claim 15 wherein fifteen single strings are strung, said strings being tuned G - A - B - C - D - E - F - G - A - B - d - f - a - d' - f, or G - A - B - C - D - E - F - G - A - B - d - f - a - d' - g'.

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace paragraph [0035] in the Description of the Drawings section on page 8 of the specification by the following paragraph:

[0035] Figs. 2 and 5 each show a top view of the under side of the face of a lute according to a respective embodiment of the invention.

Please insert the following paragraphs after paragraph [0036] in the Description of the Drawings section on page 8 of the specification:

Fig. 4 shows another longitudinal section of the lute according to an embodiment of the invention. The longitudinal section is taken along a transverse rib of the lute shown in Fig. 2.

Fig. 6 shows yet another longitudinal section of the lute according to an embodiment of the invention. The longitudinal section is taken along line VI-VI in Fig. 5.

Figs. 7 and 8 each show a stringed lute according to a respective embodiment of the invention.

Please replace paragraph [0037] on page 8 of the specification by the following amended paragraph:

[0037] As shown in the drawings (Figures 1-7), the lute 1 comprises a bulging sound box 2. This is shaped so that it tapers down to a virtual tip 3. At the tip 3, a neck 4 is attached. This neck 4 comprises a fingerboard 5, provided with frets 33 (~~not explicitly shown~~). At its free end, the neck 4 bears a peg box 6.

Please replace paragraph [0042] on page by the following paragraph:

[0042] On the under side of the face 12, an area 21 free from transverse ribs is provided. The thickness of face 12 at least in this area 21 may be tapered or reduced toward rim 13 (Figure 6). This ribless area 21 consists of first part 22 and a second part 23, arranged on opposite sides of end piece 15. The two parts may be fabricated either as a single piece of material or as multiple pieces as may be convenient in known fabrication arts for shaping face 12 to vault over camber 20. The first part extends between the end piece 15 and the end 24 of the rim 13 away from the neck. The second part 23 borders on the first part 22 and is about the same centerline length as

the first part 22. The second part extends between mutually opposed edge portions 25 and 26. In one arrangement (Figure 4) at least two laths 27 run under at least one transverse ribs (e.g., rib 29) which lie closest to unribbed area 21 without contact with the transverse rib. By this arrangement a tunnel-shaped recess 29' is formed at the intersection between rib 29 and laths 27. This arrangement of avoiding contact between laths 27 and rib 29, affords passage of sound by way of the laths also into that part of the area, which is provided with ribs. In the arrangement illustrated in Figure 4, the ends of rib 29 rest on abutments 34 proximate to rim 8 of back 7.

Amendments to the Drawings:

Seven sheets of drawings (FIGS. 1-8) are attached.

FIGS. 1-2 are original.

FIGS. 3 and 4 were previously presented (Reply to Office Action, mailed 11/21/03). FIG. 4 has been further amended to label element 29'.

Additional FIGS. 5 - 7 show claim features as required by the Examiner.

Attachments: Seven replacement sheets of drawings